Giraldus Cambrensis – “Gerald of Wales” aka Gerald de Barri

Born c. 1146. Died c. 1223

Father: William de Barri
Mother: Angharad, daughter of Gerald de Windsor

Giraldus Cambrensis was a noted historian and the Archdeacon of Brecon. He wrote some seventeen books, including the historically important *The Journey through Wales*.

Giraldus Cambrensis is the grandson of Gerald de Windsor through his daughter Angharad.

Gerald of Wales

Giraldus was a pious man who believed women were not to be trusted and were the source of great temptation.

He wrote "Nor are [women] ever wanting in efforts to establish their power over the men in a variety of ways."[1] His views on women were said to be common in the Middle Ages. Giraldus had both a professional and personal interest in criticizing women and men whose behavior failed to meet rigorous moral standards set by the Church.

A vigorous polemicist, Giraldus was outspoken against the sexual abuses practiced by clerics and the laity, a preoccupation that may stem from the reputation of his grandmother Nesta, “a woman notorious in her time for sexual exploits”.

The following is an excerpt of his description of the people of Wales in the late 12th century:[1]

The women as well as the men cut their hair in a circle round their ears and their eyes. The women wear head-dresses of white cloth which has been placed in coils like a turban of the Persians.
Everyone takes great care of their teeth by rubbing them regularly with hazel green and wiping them with a piece of woollen cloth until they become as white as ivory. In their care for their teeth, they refrain from eating hot meals. The men shave their beards except for only the mustache.
The people show special skill on their musical instruments, the harp, the pipes, and the crowd. Bards are very numerous among them and those who compose poetry are excellent. They like alliteration very much. In their music, they are wont to sing in unison, but in many voices, modes, and keys. In a company of singers are heard as many different keynotes and voices as there are heads to be seen but in the end all finish together with B flat.

Everyone puts a high price on pure pedigree and noble lineage. The most common man of no note is concerned with his genealogical table. Because of this emphasis on pedigrees and family relationship, they are ready to avenge any wrong that has been done to their kindred, whether the wrong be old or recent."

Online Genealogy References:
WikiTree ID: Barry-2632
FamilySearch ID: G8DB-KXP
Wikipedia: Gerald of Wales

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References

1. Wright, Thomas, The Historical Works of Giraldus Cambrensis, London George Bell & Sons, 1905

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